

Lesson 7.5

LOCAL HISTORY FIELD TRIP: A GRAVEYARD SCAVENGER HUNT

Objective: Students will learn about the history of their own community by exploring a local graveyard.

Materials:

- **Sheet 7.5:** A Graveyard Scavenger Hunt student handout
- Clipboards or notebooks for students to write on

Timing: 1-2 class periods

Background Preparation: Make sure you contact the cemetery you plan to visit well in advance of the field trip, and set up an appointment. Some cemeteries may have rules and restrictions that you should be aware of. Make sure you brief students on being respectful of the gravesites and any mourners who may be visiting while they are there.

Procedure:

1. The day before the class goes on the field trip, have a discussion with students about local history. History is not just about famous people--it is also about everyday local people who lived in the past. Where can you find local history? A graveyard is a visual record of people who lived in a community in the past. It doesn't have to be spooky--graveyards are for visiting.
2. Have students suggest ideas as to what they should look for on the graves they come across in the graveyard. Some might be:
 - epitaphs
 - gravestone art or symbols
 - years a person lived
 - the kinds of gravestones or monuments that mark each grave
3. On the day of the field trip, hand out the Graveyard Scavenger Hunt student handouts and make sure each student has a clipboard or notebook to write on. Make your way to the graveyard.
4. Have students fill out their Scavenger Hunt forms at the graveyard. Give them enough time to complete their sheets. Depending on the graveyard, students may not be able to find answers to all the questions on the sheets. You may wish to modify the sheets beforehand.
5. On your return to the classroom, ask students to share some of their reactions to the trip.
 - Which graves struck them as being the most interesting? Why?

- Did they notice any symbols? What might they symbolize?
- Were there many old graves? New graves?
- What can you learn about local history from visiting a graveyard? How might a historian use this information?

Follow-up Activities:

- Portfolio option: Have students pick a name they came across in the graveyard and research it. They should visit the library and look through old town directories, vital statistics books, or other records their librarian suggests. If they can't find information on the individual buried in the graveyard, they might find information on members of the same family. If they come up completely dry, have them write about their research efforts--where they looked and the problems they had.
- Have students do a grave rubbing of a grave that struck them as particularly interesting. They might even do some research on the meaning of symbols they found on a grave.

Alignment with the Learning Results:

Grade Level: **6th-8th**

Content Area: Social Studies: **APPLICATIONS**

Standard: **Researching and Developing Positions on Current Social Studies Issues**

Students research, select, and present a position on a current social studies issue by proposing and revising research questions, and locating and selecting information from multiple and varied sources.

Descriptor **A1c**: Locate and access relevant information that includes multiple perspectives from varied sources.

Name: _____

Date: _____

A GRAVEYARD SCAVENGER HUNT

Graveyards are great sources of information about local history. Explore your local graveyard and learn something about the people that lived and died in your town. Answer the following questions as a guide to help you explore.

1. What is the name and location of the graveyard you are visiting? _____

2. About how many people are buried there? _____

3. Find the gravestone of someone buried in the 1800s. Record his or her name and the dates he or she lived. _____

4. Find the gravestone of someone buried in the early 1900s. Record his or her name and the dates he or she lived. _____

5. Find the grave of a child. What was his or her name? _____

_____ How old was he or she at death? _____

6. Find an epitaph that you think is interesting and copy it here. _____

_____ Why does it interest you? _____

7. Find a gravestone with a symbol engraved in it. Sketch it on the back of this sheet.

8. What do you think the symbol might mean? _____

9. Find the grave of the oldest person you can. What was his or her name?

How old was he or she when he or she died? _____

10. Find the grave of someone whose name you recognize. What is the name?

Where have you heard it before? _____

11. Find a gravestone that has been decorated. When did the person die? _____

What decorations are there? _____

What do you think the decorations might signify? _____

12. Find the oldest grave you can (Can you find a grave from the 1700s? Or the early 1800s?). What is the name of the person who died? _____

When did he or she die? _____
